

At-home, self-collection tests for COVID-19

1. What is an at-home, self-collection test for COVID-19?

- a. Self-collection tests are available either by prescription or over the counter, without a prescription, in a pharmacy, online, or in retail stores.
 - i. There are sample collection kits that are medically observed at home but then sent to a laboratory for testing. These follow separate recommendations which are not described below. Results from these tests are reported to Maine CDC.
- b. At home, self-collection tests are used for the detection of [current infection](#).
- c. Please read the manufacturer's instructions before using the test. Some tests require a nasal specimen and other tests require a saliva specimen. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have questions about the test or your results.

2. When can you consider using a home test?

- a. People with symptoms of COVID-19.
- b. People with a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
 - i. For fully vaccinated people without symptoms, but with a known exposure, Maine CDC suggests testing 3-5 days after an exposure.
 - ii. For unvaccinated people without symptoms, but with a known exposure, Maine CDC suggests testing as soon as possible, and again in 5-7 days if the first test result is negative.

3. How to test:

- a. Wash your hands with soap and water.
- b. Open the box and follow the manufacturer's instructions included with the specimen collection or test kit to [collect your own nasal or saliva specimen](#).
- c. If you do not collect the specimens as directed, your test results may be incorrect.

4. What do the results mean?

- a. If your test is **positive**:
 - i. [Isolate](#) immediately. Inform [close contacts](#) that they may have been exposed to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
 - ii. Tell your healthcare provider about your positive result and stay in contact with them during your illness. As much as possible, stay in a room and away from other people and pets in your home or place of residence.
 - iii. Maine CDC does not collect results from at-home, self-collection tests. This means you do not need to call Maine CDC to report your positive result.
 1. People who test positive on an at-home, self-collection test get a confirmatory PCR test within 48 hours of the positive at-home, self-collection test result. Here is information of where you can find [free COVID 19 testing in Maine](#).
 2. People who test positive on an at-home, self-collection test who chose not to get a confirmatory PCR test should remain in [isolation](#) until they meet the criteria for release.
 3. People who test positive with an at-home, self-collection test must [quarantine](#) for each exposure after this positive test.
 - iv. If you need help during your [isolation](#), resources are available to assist you with food/groceries, a thermometer, and information about COVID isolation shelters. You can self-refer online at <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/covid-19-referral-form>, email DHHS.covidsocialsupport@maine.gov, or call 211. Language support is available.
- b. If your test is **negative**:
 - i. If you took the test [while you had symptoms](#):
 1. And followed all instructions carefully, a negative result means your current illness is probably not due to COVID-19. However, it is possible for a test to give a negative result in some people who have COVID-19. This is called a false negative. You could also test negative if the specimen was collected too early in your infection. In this case, you could test positive later during your illness. Consider repeating a test in 2 days.

2. Regardless of your vaccination status, if you have symptoms, you need to isolate. Contact your healthcare provider about your symptoms, especially if they worsen, about follow-up testing, and for guidance on how long to isolate.
- ii. If you took the test while you did not have symptoms:
 1. If you are not fully vaccinated and you have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 (within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period), [quarantine](#).
 2. If you are fully vaccinated and you have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 (within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period), you do not need to quarantine.
- iii. If you need help during your [quarantine](#), resources are available to assist you with food/groceries, a thermometer, and information about COVID quarantine shelters. You can self-refer online at <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/covid-19-referral-form>, email DHHS.covidsocialsupport@maine.gov, or call 211. Language support is available.
- c. If your test shows **invalid or error**:
 - i. If the display on the at-home, self-collection test shows an invalid result or a test error, the test did not work properly. If this happens, refer to the instructions for use in the package insert and contact the manufacturer for assistance.
 - ii. Invalid results can occur for many reasons. Your specimen may not have been collected correctly, or the testing instrument may have malfunctioned. Invalid test results are rare but can occur.
5. Schools, businesses, and other employers or facilities can choose whether or not they accept at-home, self-collection tests.